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ABSTRACT

To comply with the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and with explicit federal guidelines for equal employment opportunity, local employment and training agencies funded by CETA need to develop client assessment programs. This volume and its companion are designed for this purpose. Five original program descriptions, and findings from large-scale surveys by Mark Battle Associates and A.L. Nellum and Associates are discussed to identify current practices, problems, and possible solutions. Both surveys indicated that the General Aptitude Test Battery was the most widely used instrument. A major problem is the lack of validated instruments for the typically disadvantaged client: the GATB is no exception. To anticipate problems or evaluate existing programs, a conceptual model of assessment and checklist for planning in-house or subcontracted programs are presented. (The appendix describes relevant reference works and information systems). (CP)

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REPORT 69

Client Assessment: A Manual for Employment and Training Agencies

by Thomas E. Backer

Volume I: Introduction to Assessment Program Development

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PREFACE

This two-volume *Manual* provides information employment and training agencies can use in

1. developing and operating client assessment programs (Volume I); and
2. identifying, adapting or developing special assessment techniques for severely disadvantaged clients (for whom widely available standard assessment tools, such as the General Aptitude Test Battery [GATB], may be inappropriate) (Volume II).

Although the two volumes are meant to be used together, they may in some cases have independent value, e.g., for planning an assessment program for which the specific techniques have already been identified or for a research use of assessment techniques where application in a practitioner setting is not required.

Volume I: Introduction to Assessment Program Development has three sections: an *introduction* describing recent trends in client assessment for employment and training agencies, presenting some background about the *Manual* and giving some basic concepts about client assessment, a section on *current practices* in employment and training agencies, including some detailed descriptions of existing assessment programs; and a discussion of *assessment program development*, including a conceptual model of assessment and a planning checklist for program developers. Volume I also contains an appendix listing information resources for assessment program development.

Volume II: Assessment Techniques begins with a brief review of standard assessment techniques, such as the GATB and Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, devices now widely used in employment and training agencies. Then a catalog is given of special assessment techniques, each entered in capsule form using a standard description format. Volume II also contains two appendices: (A) a chart listing special devices available for assessment of seriously disadvantaged persons; and (B) information resources regarding assessment of the disabled.

This two-volume *Manual* is designed principally for use by employment and training agency personnel responsible for developing and operating assessment programs; other agency staff involved with these programs; and administrators of local agencies, who have to make the larger decisions about assessment and how it should fit into the rest of their service delivery operation. The *Manual* may be of secondary, but in some cases important, interest to researchers and policy makers and also to persons concerned with assessment in other service delivery settings (e.g., vocational rehabilitation agencies). It should be of direct value to persons working in client assessment programs for employment and training services that are attached to educational institutions or agencies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Setting the Stage

Many new challenges have emerged recently regarding client asssessment in employment and training agencies. In particular, the 1978 legislation reauthorizing the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) contains two sections that give added importance to client assessment activities for all federally supported adult and youth programs. Section 205, under Title II, Participant Assessment, requires each Prime Sponsor to develop a personalized employability plan ". . .taking into consideration an individual's skills, interests and career objectives. . .and shall consider the barriers to employment or advancement faced by that individual. . ." The section goes on to state, "an assessment of appropriate training and supportive services shall be made at entrance to a program (Title II) which shall be reviewed periodically. . .(and) shall be included in each individual's employability plan." Section 445, the general provisions of the Title IV youth programs, requires "appropriate counseling and placement services designed to facilitate transition of youth. . .to permanent jobs. . .or education or training programs."

Thus, there is now more explicit Federal encouragement of systematic client assessment as part of employment and training service delivery. Agencies that may never before have considered having a formal assessment program now are likely to do so because of this part of the new legislation. Almost all agencies may need to review—and probably update and improve—their in-house or subcontracted assessment functions.

A second trend regarding assessment that is gathering force is represented by the 1978 *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* (as published in the *Federal Register,* Vol. 43, No. 166). These *Guidelines* set out a revised and expanded policy, one that applies to employment and training agencies as well as to private industry, for assuring that assessment devices used to make decisions about employment or employment-related activities do not unfairly discriminate against certain protected groups, such as women and racial or ethnic minorities. Enforcement of these *Guidelines* will compel agencies to look at their assessment procedures in new ways, probably to revise or eliminate some methods now being used because of potential or actual discrimination, and to gather data on validity and possible adverse impact. Agencies not undertaking such steps may find themselves subject to administrative disciplinary action, or even to lawsuits alleging discrimination.

Finally, there is a challenge presented by assessment technology itself. On the one hand, new approaches to assessment of seriously disadvantaged persons have been developed over the last 10 years, and some of these are now

be ng used in local employment and training settings. Developments from the United States Employment Service, from research funded by the Department of Labor and from the private sector figure in this advancing state of the art of assessment technology for persons who cannot appropriately be assessed using the standard paper-and-pencil tests. But the very availability of this new resource for assessment creates problems in terms of selecting *which* assessment techniques would be most appropriate for use in a given setting, and in *adapting* available assessment technology to varying local needs.

Moreover, there is evidence that in a significant number of employment and training agency settings, inappropriate psychological tests are now being used in client assessment. There are many "horror stories"—use of sophisticated clinical projective tests, such as the Rorschach, for making employment-related decisions with the tests administered and scored by minimally trained staff; use of gross measures of psychopathology, such as the *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory*, for making determinations about individuals' personality functioning in the normal range. Whether the problem is a test administered for a purpose it was never intended to serve or inadequate training of testing personnel, there is substantial reason to believe that assessment in some employment and training agency settings may be off on unproductive, even potentially harmful, tangents. The harm to clients may come from providing inaccurate, misleading information about their employment-related characteristics; harm to agencies may be in terms of potential legal liability for decisions made on the basis of such information.

These are some of the important challenges to CETA-funded employment and training agencies—a press on the one hand to assess, to improve service delivery through appropriate use of assessment results; and a press on the other hand *not* to use given approaches to assessment unless it is established that the information they provide is relevant and that clients can perform validly on them. Finally, there is the problem of *assessing* the resources that do exist for helping to meet these needs.

Purpose of the *Manual*

This volume and its companion are designed to respond to these challenges. They can serve as an aid in the development of assessment programs for local employment and training agencies, starting with the conceptualization of the goals and purposes of assessment, moving through resource identification and program development, to implementation, and ending with evaluation and program improvement efforts. Special coverage is also given to assessment techniques for use with clients who are severely disadvantaged.

The entire *Manual* is designed to speak most directly to employment and training agency staff in charge of developing or maintaining client assessment programs. Practitioners who have to live with and use the assessment program and administrators who have to make decisions about assessment in the context of other aspects of their agency's operations are the two other most important audiences for the *Manual*. It may also be of some interest to test developers, researchers and policy makers at the Federal level.

The present volumes represent a substantial revision and update of a work the author prepared in 1972, also under Department of Labor funding support, entitled *Methods of Assessing the Disadvantaged in Manpower Programs: A Review and Analysis* (Backer, 1972). That monograph brought together for the first time available knowledge about what tests and other kinds of assessment devices had been or might be used with disadvantaged populations. Included were instruments developed by the Department of Labor and contractors, by the U.S. Employment Service, by grantees of other funding agencies and by the private sector. Since its initial publication, some 15,000 copies of that monograph have been distributed, reflecting a real need among employment and training agencies for practical information about assessment.

However, much has happened since 1972. The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act has been passed and reauthorized; categorical programs have dwindled and multiservice general agencies at the local level are the rule; despite reduced R&D support for assessment from the Department of Labor, some new assessment devices have emerged since the 1972 monograph was prepared. And the whole atmosphere in America regarding assessment has changed; EEOC lawsuits have become prevalent in connection with allegedly discriminatory assessment or selection procedures in private industry, and suits are being or may be mounted against employment and training agencies; Congressional attention has focused on assessment practices in local CETA-funded agencies, and not always with favor.

For all of these reasons, a new manual on client assessment is in order. These volumes are a natural extension and refinement of the author's 1972 work. There is a key emphasis on *assessment program development*—on the

practicalities of thinking about, planning for and implementing the system that will make possible the use of selected assessment devices. However, while the first monograph was primarily a state-of-the-art review designed to describe Department of Labor-funded research projects in the assessment area, the present effort has a broader goal. It is intended to be a practical guide book for use by local program personnel at the several levels mentioned above. Further, more attention has been given in this volume to resource identification, so that the *Manual* can serve as an "on-paper clearinghouse" for information about assessment techniques for the seriously disadvantaged. Wherever possible, information is provided on how to acquire a copy of whatever is being discussed.

Emphasis on the practical information needs of assessment program developers in employment and training agencies also is reflected in the strategies used to develop these volumes. For the 1972 monograph, a key developmental technique was a one-day conference whose participants were mostly assessment technique developers and researchers, with only a few practitioners present. Here, however, most of the collaboration has been with program developers.

This collaboration has proceeded in two ways: first, in the review of drafts of this manuscript by a number of persons from employment and training agencies; and second, via presentations to employment and training agency staff in the Orange County, California area given by the author during the project's initial stages. At these presentations, outlines of the *Manual* were circulated, and there was considerable audience discussion of what ought to be included in the *Manual* to make it most relevant to assessment program developers, practitioners and administrators in local agencies. In essence, then, *Client Assessment: A Manual for Employment and Training Agencies* is designed for practitioners.

What's Included—and What Isn't

In discussing special assessment techniques here, severely disadvantaged persons are defined as those individuals whose sociocultural or educational deficits interfere with maximizing their employability potential. More specifically, the severely disadvantaged are those persons who cannot validly complete standard client assessment techniques (e.g., the General Aptitude Test Battery) because of their sociocultural or educational deficits, including prior lack of experience or aversive experience with testing. This definition includes a large number of persons receiving or eligible for employment and training services.

The definition excludes persons whose primary employability deficit has to do with such factors as physical disability or mental illness. Assessment devices

are available for these groups, and currently many more such clients are coming to CETA-sponsored employment and training agencies to receive counseling, training and placement services. However, limits in the resources supporting this work necessitated restricting the focus to assessment devices for the severely disadvantaged as defined above. Nevertheless, what is said here about how to develop, implement and maintain assessment programs in employment and training agencies is *not* limited in any way. Except for the coverage of assessment devices in the second volume, this *Manual* is intended to be used in setting up and operating any kind of assessment program in an employment and training setting.

Standard tools, such as the General Aptitude Test Battery and other U.S. Employment Service-published assessment devices designed primarily for non-disadvantaged persons, are treated only in brief because they already have been well covered in other publications, e.g., those of the Employment Service. Information about other standard tests that might be used in an employment and training agency setting can be obtained through reference to retrieval resources in the second volume and the appendix of this volume. Resources for assessment of physically disabled persons are identified in Appendix B of the second volume.*

Specific information about the contents of this *Manual* is provided in the Preface. The next section offers a fairly comprehensive definition of assessment as background for a discussion of assessment program development and operation.

Definition of Assessment

Assessment involves gathering information about the aptitudes, skills, attitudes, personality traits and life and work histories of persons seeking services from local employment and training agencies. Results of assessment may be used to meet one of more of the objectives stated below.

Purposes of Assessment

1. *For admitting clients to given service programs or program elements.* Given certain program goals, it may be necessary to restrict the flow of clients to those meeting certain criteria. For example, in a training program where only those with at least sixth-grade math skills are likely to benefit, asses-

* There is, in reality, some slippage in the above definition of what's included and what isn't. For example, the second volume devotes attention to a number of assessment systems or devices developed primarily for a physically disabled population.

ment might be used to screen out prospective enrollees with less than the required math ability. Presumably those excluded would be channeled to another program or given the remedial education necessary to achieve a sixth-grade math level. In other cases, limited program resources mean that only a certain number of clients can be accommodated at one time. Thus, it becomes necessary to restrict the flow of those entering the program. Assessment might then be used to select those most likely to succeed.

In either case, it is important that the variables assessed are truly relevant to successful outcomes and are measured as accurately as possible. Assessment should not be a means simply of keeping a service effort to a manageable size; random selection would achieve this goal just as well. Use of assessment tools should reflect a commitment to provide the best possible services to program applicants. On the other hand, even accurate selection of those most likely to succeed, e.g., in a training program, might be challenged on the grounds that it may discriminate against those who need the program's services most. Clear statements of program goals are required, therefore, in order to decide how assessment can best be used for admission decisions.

2. *For assignment to training.* For many disadvantaged individuals, employability development entails acquiring vocational and behavioral skills necessary for successful work functioning. Perhaps the key variable here is "learning potential" or "trainability," the individual's capacity for behavioral change following a training experience—a variable that systematic assessment can help to measure. A crucial consideration is the number of training options open. If only two training programs are available, it may not take much information to decide which is preferable for given enrollees. Also, there is some research evidence to suggest that characteristics associated with training success are not necessarily related to later job success. Several phases of assessment then may be required to guide an enrollee from entry through training to placement, each one clearly spelled out as to how results will be used.

3. *For counseling and personal development.* At least as important as skill training is preparing clients psychologically for the world of work. Such vocational and personal exploration ideally is done by a counselor *with* rather than *to* or *for* the client. If so, assessment data must be relevant and understandable to the person counseled.

Almost any valid assessment tool can be used as part of a growth experience for the client by the simple mechanism of feeding back results in terms he or she will understand. Feedback may offer the client an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. Information about personal or vocational characteristics and about available training or placement

options can be given. Then the client can be encouraged to work with the counselor or employability development team to formulate a plan for his or her own vocational advancement. To a disadvantaged person whose previous life experience may have involved many decisions or outcomes imposed from outside, such a participative experience can be extremely valuable in itself.

4. *For job placement.* Given accurate assessment of job characteristics, successful placement involves matching the individual to a suitable job opening. It is crucial that assessment devices tap variables of real importance to job success. Thus, employment and training agency staff need to know how well a device predicts success, and under what conditions, when using it to help make placement decisions.

5. *For pretesting orientation.* Sometimes performance on subsequent assessment tasks can be enhanced when people who are not very "test wise" (or who are very anxious about being assessed) are given a chance to try out their test-taking skills. When such trial runs are given, it is important that the practice materials bear some resemblance to the test devices that will be used later, without reducing the validity of results because of practice effects. Practice with test-like materials can be important both for skill development in test taking and for generating more psychological comfort during assessment.

6. *For evaluation of the employment and training agency.* At a time when the public and its representatives in legislatures are demanding justification of government expenditures on all levels, systematic evaluations of CETA-sponsored agency effectiveness are increasingly frequent. Some of the problems inherent in establishing appropriate criteria to judge program success will be discussed later in this volume. When these criteria involve assessing enrollees, e.g., to find out what they've learned or how they've changed during their participation in a program, it may be particularly important that assessment tools used at entry permit valid re-administration and that change scores be translatable into concrete conclusions about program functioning.

7. *For test development and research.* Local employment and training agency clients sometimes serve as subjects in basic research efforts. Understanding of the impact of cultural disadvantagement on vocational adjustment can be increased through empirical studies of clients' life histories and psychological characteristics. Clients serving as subjects for such studies should represent an adequate sample of the overall target population. Detrimental effects on clients as a result of participation must be avoided. For example, since academic tests represent highly aversive experiences for many of the

disadvantaged, research devices should be carefully tailored to minimize anxiety and other negative reactions.

Putting Assessment in Context: Some General Criteria

What constitutes a successful assessment program? The following criteria are one answer to this question and should be kept in mind as readers consider the information and guidance offered in the rest of this volume.

1. *Assessment should be relevant to the needs and priorities of the local agency setting in which it is used and should fit into the total context of agency objectives.* Assessment is only one of many services a local employment and training agency will provide. Even the smallest and simplest service effort may entail a number of program components with which the assessment effort must fit reasonably well. In designing an assessment program, therefore, questions like the following become relevant: When should assessment occur? How fast must the results of assessment be delivered in order to prove useful for making decisions? How does the cost (in money, manpower and physical space) for asssessment relate to the other program components? What possible side effects of assessment might be expected to impact on other service delivery components?

   Only by paying careful attention to issues such as these can an assessment program be constructed to fit smoothly with the entire service delivery operation. Budgets and operating constraints are just as important for assessment-program developers as for those developing a training program, a job-placement effort, and so forth. The context into which assessment fits in a local employment and training agency will be discussed further in Section II.

2. *Each individual assessment device must serve a practical purpose in achieving employment and training agency goals for given clients.* Evaluation of the effectiveness of assessment techniques or entire programs may thus be measured along one or more of the following factors:

   a. *Soundness* and *relevance* of assessment results for input to agency decision making.

   b. Actual *impact* on service delivery (measured in terms of stated agency objectives to provide counseling, training or placement services).

   c. *Cost* of the assessment technique or program (including cost of acquiring and implementing the assessment technology; staff time and facilities needed to operate the assessment program; amount of time it takes to complete the assessment process).

d. *Timeliness* with which assessment results are provided in relation to other aspects of the service delivery operation.

e. *Agency staff acceptance* of the assessment program and its results.

f. *Client acceptance* of the assessment program and its results.

g. *Unexpected payoffs* and *negative side effects* from assessment, such as delays in other aspects of service delivery because of the need to assess at a certain point in the service delivery process.

Assessment, just as much as any other program component in a local employment and training agency, should be subjected to rigorous evaluation to determine whether or not the effort should be continued and to ascertain what improvements could be made to increase overall effectiveness and efficiency of operation. More will be said later about evaluation of assessment programs.

II. CURRENT PRACTICES

Overview

This section is designed to serve three main purposes: first, to review informally the kinds of assessment programs now operating in employment and training agencies; second, to identify some of the major problems and pitfalls now being faced in client assessment; and third, to present some ways in which these problems have been addressed. These subjects will be approached by presenting the results of two surveys (one national and one regional) of assessment practices, supplemented by observations based on the author's own experience, and by five original program descriptions especially prepared for this volume.

Portrait of Client Assessment: The Results of Two Surveys

While many data-gathering efforts sponsored by the Department of Labor or by local prime sponsors have touched on the topic of assessment, to the author's knowledge there are only two recent surveys focusing on this subject: a 1975 report by Mark Battle Associates on assessment practices among CETA prime sponsors and a 1979 study by A.L. Nellum and Associates about counseling and assessment practices in DOL Region III.* Results of these two survey studies are summarized below.

The Mark Battle survey. In late 1975, the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration received a letter from the Justice Department expressing concern that CETA prime sponsors might be administering or using tests in a manner that would interfere with equal opportunity rights of CETA participants. To determine the possible validity of this concern, DOL developed and administered a questionnaire for CETA prime sponsors and their subagents to complete regarding their use of test instruments in CETA programs. Mark Battle Associates was requested to analyze data from these questionnaires and compare findings with the available literature on psychological testing to determine how appropriately these instruments were being used in CETA prime sponsor and subagent assessment programs. The study's final report was submitted in 1976 (Mark Battle Associates, 1976).

*Copies of these reports may be obtained by writing to Mark Battle Associates, 1019 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; and to A.L. Nellum and Associates, 161 Forbes Street, Braintree, Massachusetts 02184.

An overview of findings from the survey data and the testing literature and three primary recommendations for further work in this area have been excerpted from the Battle Associates report and are presented here.

Findings from the survey data

- There were 2,685 CETA prime sponsors and subagents responding to the survey.
- There were 321 different tests used by respondents, including USES tests.
- The most popular USES test was the General Aptitude Test Battery; second most popular was the Clerical Skills test.
- Sixty percent (60%) of CETA prime sponsors/subagents responding to the survey *used no tests* in their activities.
- Twenty-three percent (23%) of CETA prime sponsors/subagents using tests utilized USES-developed tests.
- Thirty-five percent (35%) *more* CETA prime sponsors/subagents used *"other"* tests than those who utilized USES-developed tests.
- Four percent (4%) of CETA prime sponsors/subagents used *both* USES-developed and other tests.
- Only 16 percent of the respondents indicated that they contracted with the SESA for testing services; only one-third of these had been given training in the interpretation and use of the test results.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents did not respond to the request for information regarding the purpose for which the tests were being used.
- The most popular purpose for tests was to assess academic and/or basic skills and for other diagnostic and evaluative purposes (29%).

Findings from testing literature

- Of the 321 tests used, 196 were not found in the testing literature;* 125 were reviewed and are discussed in the report.
- Other than miscellaneous tests, which were largely unidentified in the literature, the most frequently used tests were achievement batteries (cited 222 times), followed by vocation-interest tests (cited 155 times).
- Only seven percent (7%) of the other tests used by respondents were multi-aptitude test batteries, such as GATB.
- Eighteen percent (18%) of tests being used by CETA prime sponsors/subagents were valid for specific occupations.

*It should be noted that Mark Battle Associates' access to the testing literature apparently was very limited; many important references are not mentioned at all in their report. Thus, this finding must be interpreted with great caution.

- Sixty-nine percent (69%) of tests being used by CETA prime sponsors/subagents were not valid for women.
- Seventy percent (70%) of tests being used by CETA prime sponsors/subagents were not valid for minorities.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) of the tests reviewed were designed to be administered by a counselor; 14 percent should be administered by a psychologist or other trained professional.
- Twenty-six tests were in the Character and Personality category. Of these, six employ projective techniques and, therefore, have questionable value as instruments for CETA purposes.

Recommendations

1. Data provided by the subject survey are not reliable or valid enough to be conclusive regarding usage of tests by CETA prime sponsors and subagents. Therefore, it is recommended that further in-depth research be conducted if generalization to the population of CETA prime sponsors and subagents is desired.
2. If another survey is conducted, the survey questionnaire should be designed to elicit reliable results (i.e., more questions will be needed to tap the universe of possible responses, and a higher question-by-question response rate will be required.)
3. Guidelines for future use of tests for the CETA program should be developed using more reliable data. DOL/ETA should consider alternative methods for collecting needed information, such as site visits to a sample of prime sponsors and subagents. Case studies would be one suggested approach (pp. 5-6).

The A.L. Nellum Survey in Region III. In 1978, A. L. Nellum and Associates was contracted by the Department of Labor's Region III Regional Office to appraise vocational counseling delivery systems operating among the CETA prime sponsors in Region III, to design a model system for the delivery of vocational counseling services and to provide technical assistance and training in the implementation of this system. A systematic assessment function was to be a part of the system.

In pursuit of the first objective, a questionnaire survey (augmented by site visits leading to case studies in selected prime sponsor agencies) was conducted in late 1978. Some of the most important conclusions drawn from the survey and case studies are as follows:

- The majority of test and assessment activity among those Region III agencies responding to the survey is subcontracted to other agencies, most com-

monly state employment services but also including a variety of private organizations.

- Although there is a wide variety of test instruments in use, the GATB is the one most frequently employed by these agencies.
- Assessment, like counseling services, is provided on an as-needed basis rather than through a predeveloped strategy.
- The counselor is usually the sole decision maker regarding client progress through the service delivery system, including the assessment component.
- Assessment systems differ widely from one prime sponsor to another and, in many cases, within the area served by a given prime sponsor.
- Most of the tests used by agencies in the region are paper-and-pencil instruments evidencing little sensitivity to cultural and linguistic differences among participants.
- Counselors are rarely well trained in procedures of administering, scoring, and interpreting assessment instruments or in using assessment results when the assessment function has been subcontracted.

Findings from the Nellum survey must be qualified by mentioning that fewer than 50 percent of the prime sponsors in Region III responded to the questionnaire. This shortcoming was mitigated somewhat, however, by the case studies of eight CETA programs Nellum prepared. Although these case studies were not primarily focused on assessment, and typically included only two or three sentences of information about assessment functions in the given employment and training agency, they did provide a good picture of assessment in the context of other service delivery functions. The Nellum report provides the following summary of assessment activities in the eight prime sponsors for which they completed case studies (pp. 66-67):

> Usually a test is administered as an initial screening device to determine an appropriate training activity for a participant. In cases where the Job Service is responsible for assessment . . . , the GATB is administered. Job Service counselors interpret these results in accordance with the participant's educational background, acquired skills and interests. A referral is then made.
>
> [One city] uses the RAT and WRAT for assessment of all participants. Based on the initial and self-admitted limited results, a referral is made to a program activity where more in-depth testing is done. The youth program . . . administers the CAT to all their participants. Goodwill Industries performs in-depth vocational assessment of special-needs participants using the Hester Evaluation System. In [another city], the 46 employment and training subcontractors determine which test to administer for their programs. There is no consistency among programs.
>
> All of the Prime Sponsors admitted the difficulty in using tests that were not normed for the CETA population. There is a need for different tests for youth

and adults, different tests to screen for occupational training and academic preparation. The OIC in [one city] has developed a special test to meet the needs of their program and participant population. A . . . subcontractor which refers the majority of its participants to a GED program uses the CAT. This is an appropriate test for the academic program referral, but it still provides limited information about the participant's vocational abilities and interests.

Some of the more sophisticated tests were used in youth programs. [One program] evaluates their youth participants with a series of instruments: JESNER Behavioral Scale, CAT, Independent Reading Inventory. [Another] uses the COATS system as a pre- and post-test measure of the job-seeking capabilities of the participants (16-19 year olds) and as the basis for a prescriptive counseling system. [Another program] uses the Strong-Campbell and the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) and the Holland SDS as tests of vocational interest. [A county program] has assimilated into its adult programs many of the test instruments developed and used in its youth programs that it found helpful.

Standardized tests, despite these shortcomings, do return some measure of vocational interest and ability, and also an insight into the academic level of the individual participant being tested. The value of these tests to the counseling process is dependent upon (1) the environment and procedures under which it is administered, (2) the degree and quality of counselor-participant interaction in the interpretation of the results, and (3) the sharing and communication of the test results with other agencies and programs to which the participant is referred. In many cases, it was observed that the test results were discussed only with the participant. The counselor used this discussion to make a decision concerning the participant's EDP referral and then the test results were filed in the participant's folder.

It was observed that sometimes testing and assessment were conducted by program agents to achieve their contracted performance obligations rather than using these tools to assist both the participant and the counselor in the decision-making process and in the development and finalization of the EDP.

In summary, in all the sites visited, testing and assessment were conducted in conjunction with a counselor. The problems identified were as wide and as varied as the number of tests used in Region III: the overemphasis of academically oriented instruments; the lack of uniformity within Prime Sponsor jurisdiction; and the limited use of instruments normed to the CETA client population.

No matter what the instrument or the procedure used, the test and assessment process should be incorporated into the larger counseling system. All Prime Sponsors requested technical assistance and training in the use and interpretation of tests with CETA participants.

Assessment Program Descriptions

The descriptions presented here grew out of an effort to learn what was happening in local assessment programs in employment and training agencies in the southern California area. Contact was established with a consortium of

agencies in Orange County, California, and the author presented several lectures to this group during conferences on assessment. As a result of this contact, invitations for a site visit were extended by several assessment program coordinators to the writer and his staff.

These visits ultimately were used to review each assessment program in meetings with appropriate staff in order to derive enough information about the way the assessment program is organized to prepare a very simple summary about it. It also was deemed important to include a description of what the U.S. Employment Service is doing through its local offices in each state via a report on the California State Employment Service. The description of the Jack Bredin Community Institute was completed without a personal site visit but contains the same basic categories of information.

PROGRAM: STATE OF CALIFORNIA, EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

Description of Agency

The Employment Development Department (EDD) is headquartered in Sacramento, California, serving the state's population through some 200 field offices. In addition to its traditional employment service functions, EDD's major service responsibilities are to provide labor exchange services for job seekers and employers, plus training and employment services for disadvantaged clients. EDD has been in operation since 1936, has a current staff between 13,000 and 15,000 and an operating budget of $384 million, with most funding provided from Federal sources. As a labor exchange, EDD provides job seekers and employers with labor market information, job requirements, job-search methods, placement services and follow-up. For disadvantaged persons, EDD operates a variety of client services, including those organized through WIN and CETA, and specialized service centers and assessment programs.

Description of Assessment Program

The overall objective of EDD's assessment program is to help individual clients find meaningful employment through accurate evaluation of their skills and potential and to match each client with potential employers. Assessment is designed on an individual basis and grows out of the one-to-one interaction between client and EDD interviewer and counselor. Information is gathered for appropriate client counseling, job matching, or referral to specialized

training programs. To accomplish this, EDD utilizes a wide range of standardized assessment tools, including:

Basic Occupational Literacy Test (BOLT), both English and Spanish versions (see Vol. II, Section II).

General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB), both English and Spanish versions (see Vol. II, Section I).

Nonreading Aptitude Test Battery (NATB), (see Vol. II, Section II).

Specific occupational test batteries. EDD currently has 466 occupational tests, keyed to specific occupations and to the DOT system. These are used to provide selection services to employers, where employers have requested test-selected referrals. All have been validated, and many have been revalidated to obtain relevant minority group data.

In addition, EDD utilizes specially developed application and screening forms in order to gather data on client demographics, job histories, actual and potential interest and skill areas, and client eligibility for special programs (such as CETA and WIN). These forms are keyed to Department of Labor requirements for information and are used by intake interviewers who assess client service needs. Assessment is conducted at various local and regional offices throughout the state which are linked by a computer network.

How the Assessment Program Developed

The assessment program grew out of EDD's function as the state's primary employment service. While initially a traditional labor exchange and administrator of Federal unemployment insurance and disability insurance benefits, EDD has continuously upgraded and expanded its assessment program to keep pace with Federal programming (such as CETA and WIN), client needs and labor market conditions.

Current Operation of the Program

The assessment program takes many forms, depending on client skill level, employment history, employability and training needs. In general, clients are first interviewed by intake personnel who determine eligibility for specific programs, conduct initial assessment, and link clients with placement interviewers, employment counselors, social service or other special program personnel who conduct additional assessment if needed. Assessment can occur in the following major program components:

1. *Employment Service.* This is the basic labor exchange function, where the objective is matching job-ready clients with existing jobs. Following the

intake interview, clients not eligible for special programs but having marketable job skills are interviewed; assessed as needed through use of GATB or specific occupational tests; instructed in job-search techniques; or given vocational training. EDD offices throughout the state share job orders and labor market data to offer clients the greatest chance of finding employment.

For clients who need them, EDD provides specialized services to overcome employment barriers such as lack of education or training, health or personal problems, lack of transportation or child care, or physical and mental handicaps. If necessary, the intake interviewer, placement interviewer or imployment counselor refers clients to the Department of Public Social Services.

2. *Service Center Program.* Clients who are disadvantaged and have special problems are referred to one of eight Service Centers located in economically depressed areas of the state. Each Center houses an EDD office and may include representatives from other agencies who can provide services such as legal aid, housing, family service, education and training. Clients are assigned to full-time case counselors who develop individualized plans tailored to specific client needs. Each client is assessed by the case counselor through basic paper-and-pencil tests (such as the GATB and NATB), and each is counseled and assisted in finding employment.

   The counselor is responsible for guiding the client through the stages of assessment, employment orientation, job development, job referral, training and, if needed, referral to outside agencies. The major difference between assessing Service Center clients and Employment Service clients is in the amount of personalized attention and services of other social service agencies available to Service Center clients.

3. *CETA and WIN.* EDD is mandated by the state to administer CETA balance-of-state grants to the 28 rural counties not populous enough to be prime sponsors on their own. In this capacity, EDD works with local agencies to provide manpower assessment, training and resource and referral services. Once CETA eligibility is determined by the intake interviewer, assessment follows the general EDD Employment Service pattern.

   In its WIN program, EDD provides clients with services such as labor market exposure, job-finding workshops, individualized job-search planning, training, career opportunity development, public service employment and work experience. Assessment in the WIN program is split into two parts: regular assessment, which is conducted by EDD using the Employment Service basic model, and social service needs assessment, conducted by the Department of Public Social Services.

   In each of its program areas, EDD assessment is conducted by intake

interviewers, placement interviewers or employment counselors. Selected EDD Employment Service personnel receive special training in selecting, administering, integrating and utilizing assessment tools and data. This training is conducted by EDD on a regular in-house basis.

Strengths of the Program

EDD's assessment program has several important strengths: (1) Although it is a large agency, assessment is geared to the needs of each client. For clients with marketable job skills, little in the way of formal paper-and-pencil assessment occurs. For disadvantaged clients with few job skills, formal assessment coupled with supportive guidance, counseling and training provide data that counselors and job developers need to be most effective in helping individual clients find jobs. (2) EDD avoids overassessment and concentrates on obtaining basic data sufficient to meet each client's specific needs. (3) All EDD assessment is directly linked to Department of Labor and other Federal guidelines, ensuring comparability with Employment Services in other states and expanding the client's marketability beyond local or regional labor markets.

Problems and Pitfalls of the Program

Two specific problems have been identified within the assessment program:

1. Assessment turn-around time tends to be lengthy, costly and often counterproductive (initial intake is usually swift, but a high volume of clients often creates lengthy waits for employment counselors in some EDD offices, with the result that clients become discouraged, may not return, or may feel that EDD is unable to help at all).
2. Other agencies, such as local college, high schools or the Veterans Administration, are not fully utilized or linked to the EDD system, thus wasting potential resources for specialized assessment.

Future Plans

EDD projects several future trends to be developed through or in conjunction with the U.S. Employment Service:

1. A new *USES Interest Checklist* and new *USES Interest Inventory* are currently under development to aid counselors. These are easy-to-administer-and-interpret assessment tools designed to tap client job interests and are keyed to the Department of Labor's forthcoming *Guide for Occupational Exploration*. These tools, along with the GATB, will shorten turn-around time and provide a standardized and validated job preference screening system.

2. Linkages with underutilized local agencies will be established to provide more in-depth and comprehensive assessment programming.

3. Standard assessment tools, such as the GATB, will be administered and scored by computer (this is a long-range goal, at least three to four years away from being operationalized).

PROGRAM: CETA UNIFIED INTAKE SERVICE, COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS, VISALIA, CALIFORNIA

Description of Agency

The CETA Unified Intake Service (CUIS) is headquartered in Visalia, a small town located in California's Central San Joaquin Valley agricultural region; it serves Tulare County's population of over 200,000. CUIS is an arm of the College of the Sequoias, subcontracting to the local CETA prime sponsor, the Tulare County Human Services Agency. CUIS's major objectives are to provide CETA eligibility, assessment and training programs to all eligible manpower clients within the county. To attain these objectives, CUIS maintains a county-wide outreach program, determines client eligibility, assesses vocational skills of clients, develops client employability plans, identifies appropriate CETA and non-CETA referral programs, and assigns clients to programs. CUIS is funded on a yearly flat-rate contractual basis. Clients include economically disadvantaged minority and unemployed persons 18 years of age or over who have few or no job skills. It has been in operation for over two years and processes about 5000 clients per year.

Description of Assessment Program

With its major objectives the screening, preparation and orientation of eligible clients for either training or employment, CUIS's efforts are directed towards client motivation, assessment and commitment to strive for realistic self-generated goals. It does not provide on-the-job training, but refers clients in need of such services to other subcontractors. Assessment focuses on motivating clients toward a self-directed search for employment and is designed to assist clients in job-search techniques, clarifying job skills and interests, understanding appropriate employment-related attitudes and values, and reducing barriers to employment. To accomplish this, the assessment program consists of a five-day process, centering on a one-and-a-half-day intensive workshop that uses small group interactive techniques. During the workshop, vocational counselors guide clients through a series of career development exercises

including employee/employer awareness training, confidence-building exercises, and success motivation activities. At one point during the two-day workshop, clients are administered a single paper-and-pencil assessment tool, the *Basic Occupational Literacy Test* (BOLT) [see Vol. II, Section II].

The BOLT is used to obtain reading and math scores after preparatory discussions about tests and test-taking and pretests. The client's performance on the pretests determines which level of BOLT will be administered, to avoid built-in failure and thus client discouragement.

After the workshop ends, each client receives individualized counseling from the instructor-counselor about his/her progress, goals, what is currently available through CETA programming or other services and what classroom training is available. If needed, the client is referred for training in a number of possible areas including: (a) work experience, (b) nontraditional women's careers, (c) job orientation, (d) work readiness and job-keeping, and (e) special careers for the handicapped. In each of these, a small-group counseling format is used. For clients who need OJT, referrals are made to an appropriate subcontractor.

How the Assessment Program Developed

Some three years ago, the CETA prime sponsor approached the College of the Sequoias about establishing a centralized assessment program. Funding was secured by contract from the CETA prime sponsor. Each year, the College is required to compete for CUIS funding. At first, CUIS used the Micro-TOWER work sample system (see Vol. II, Section II). As client volume expanded, however, this was replaced with the current workshop system because: (1) CUIS was dealing with an increasing volume of clients, (2) turnaround time was critical for the program's success, and (3) the local labor market was not highly technical and typically did not need the kinds of skills a work sample system was capable of assessing. The workshop system addressed these problems and was able to capture and capitalize on subjective variables (self-confidence, motivation) which enable clients to assess and motivate themselves. Client evaluations of the system have been positive.

Current Operation of the Program

Clients come to CUIS from the state Employment Service, subcontractors, and through self-referrals. CUIS advertises in the local media to attract clients and publicize the program. The typical "Employment Motivation Assessment Process" is as follows:

1. *Eligibility Evaluation Phase.* Clients' eligibility for the program is determined by intake eligibility interviewers. In addition to collecting demo-

graphic and socioeconomic data, the eligibility interviewer gathers information about work history, skills training, special talents and career aspirations. These data are recorded and transferred to the client's counselor for later use. Ineligible clients are referred to other service agencies. Those clients with immediately marketable job skills receive counseling and are then referred to an appropriate subcontractor. During intake, clients are given a take-home, self-scoring practice math test and are asked to bring the completed test to the workshop.

2. *Employment Motivation Assessment Workshop.* This one-and-a-half-day session is broken into three half-day segments. The first half-day is devoted to educating clients about CETA through small-group interactions and didactic presentations and administering a math and language pretest. Here, the objectives are to develop a self-help environment, inform clients about the assessment program, discuss expectations and increase motivation for employment. During the second half-day, clients are given the BOLT (pretest performance determines what level of the test is to be administered to a given client). In addition, clients are guided through exercises designed to identify individual attributes, occupational skills, job barriers and goals. The third half-day is devoted to helping clients develop an employability plan. The counselor-instructor leads clients in specialized activities where they learn to identify personal and vocational skills, narrow employment interest choices, match career goals with realistic methods of achieving them and evaluate their own commitment to succeed in CETA programs and to obtain long-term employment. Workshops are conducted by professional vocational counselors. CUIS staff members are trained and certified in the administration, scoring, interpretation and use of the BOLT by U.S. Department of Labor trainers.

3. *Counselor Assessment Integration.* After reviewing data from the assessment workshop, the counselor-instructor meets with each client individually for one hour. Together, they focus on career objectives, realistic goals, strengths and weaknesses, motivation and commitment to succeed and available employment programs. Tentative career choices are made, and the client is informed that his/her decision will be represented at the selection committee meeting, which is the next step in the assessment process.

4. *Selection Committee.* Counselors meet twice weekly to select clients for countywide CETA programs. Each client's employability plan is reviewed, and clients are assigned to available openings based on their motivation, work readiness, economic need, abilitites, work values and employment barriers. Because there are limited numbers of openings, clients not referred to CETA programs may be offered other services: work readiness

training, job search orientation, GED programs, community resource referrals, or special programs for clients who are hard to place.

5. *Placement Services,* when needed, are provided by the state Employment Service, subcontractors or county agencies.

Strengths of the Program

CUIS's Employment Motivation Assessment Program is unusual in its emphasis on individual client self-motivation and movement away from more traditional assessment techniques. Its specific strengths are these:

1. Clients participate actively in assessment; evaluate their own occupational interests and abilities; and develop goals, an employability plan and a sense of commitment to the program.
2. Counselors provide a one-to-one basis for interaction with clients at each stage of the assessment program, use their time more effectively, promote maximum client learning and help clients to help themselves.
3. Overall, the entire program can result in greater cost effectiveness in the long run, higher client success rates, fewer client complaints of unfairness and bias, lower counselor "burn-out" rates and effective utilization of employment resources. Some data are available from CUIS to support these assertions.

Problems and Pitfalls of the Assessment Program

Although CUIS's program has been successful in terms of client volume, client feedback, CETA goals and placement success, some problems have been identified:

1. There is a need for additional staff personnel, vocational counselors and instructors to maintain a high level of personalized service to clients.
2. There appears to be some conflict in the expectations of CUIS, the CETA prime sponsor, subcontractors, clients and employers.
3. Centralized assessment of some skill areas, such as typing and clerical, is needed.
4. A fragmentation of services often results from the relatively large number of subcontractors and the physical distance between all components of the system.
5. Organizational and budget constraint problems tend to impede overall program effectiveness.

Future Plans

CUIS anticipates that budget, organizational and related problems will be resolved as their system gains experience over time and as new service areas are identified for program expansion. The issues of interagency communications and interface with the community's employers are currently being addressed and are particularly vital for CUIS's future.

PROGRAM: MANPOWER ASSESSMENT & PLACEMENT SYSTEM (MAPS), PLACENTIA, CALIFORNIA

Description of Agency

MAPS is headquartered in Placentia, California and serves the high school student population of several school districts. As an organizing system, MAPS' primary objective is to offer counseling, assessment and placement services to high school students who need employment. It includes economically disadvantaged, minority and handicapped students as well as those from economically advantaged backgrounds. MAPS has been in operation since September 1978, and approximately 2,600 students have enrolled for services since that date. Funding for the program comes from both Federal and state sources.

Description of the Assessment Program

The goal of MAPS' assessment program is to obtain a level of data on client interest and skill levels sufficient for counseling and placement services or referral to training programs. Assessment is designed to gather only enough information for these purposes, and MAPS attempts to avoid over-assessment. The following assessment tools are used:

COATS job-matching, employability attitudes and skills components (see Vol. II, Section II).

VALPAR system (see Vol. II, Section II).

California Occupation Preference System (COPS) and *Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS)*, both commercially available job interest and aptitude screening devices.

Pictorial Interest Exploration Survey (PIES), a commercially available job interest screening device (see Vol. II, Section II).

Assessment is conducted at the local high schools. MAPS has a large, self-contained camper which is used to transfer the work sample equipment and is used as a mobile assessment center.

How the Assessment Program Developed

The MAPS program was created in response to the need for reducing youth unemployment in the area it serves. Funded by CETA, the prime sponsor is the North Orange County Regional Occupational Program.

Current Operation of the Program

MAPS is operated through the Placentia high school district. Each high school in the service area has a career center staffed by counselors and each has a MAPS computer terminal for client data input and job-matching output. The MAPS assessment process consists of the following steps:

1. The MAPS program is publicized at each school through posters, descriptive literature and personal contacts with counselors, teachers and students.
2. The student completes an application form. CETA eligibility is determined, but non-CETA eligibles are also accepted.
3. The COPS instrument is administered to all students. About half of the students complete the COPS instrument, depending upon the counselor's determination of need for the data it provides. For students who are educationally, physically or emotionally handicapped, PIES is used. COATS and VALPAR are used as needed. At each school, counselors have the flexibility to add other standardized assessment tools to the battery if they believe that more information is needed.
4. After formal assessment is completed, data are analyzed and used by the counselor to select an appropriate DOT-keyed employment area. Both the student and counselor work together to make this selection. The student is informed of the assessment results, with the counselor interpreting their meaning in terms of strengths, interests and weaknesses. Short- and long-range career goals are established from this interaction.
5. Assessment data are entered on the MAPS computer through terminals at each school. The computer is then used to match the student with specific DOT job categories and existing employment services. If CETA-eligible, the student is referred to a CETA agency. If not CETA-eligible, a non-CETA agency or specific employer is selected for referral. Assessment data

are made available to the referral agency. All MAPS referral agencies have computer terminals; hard copy is provided if requested.

6. If the student is unable to secure employment or training, the counselor reviews available data, confers with the student, and another referral source and/or employment area is selected.

Assessment is conducted by a variety of personnel at the various schools, including academic counselors and career guidance counselors. At each school, individual or group testing is used, depending upon the client volume. Training for assessors varies from school to school except in the case of professional guidance counselors whose education specialty equips them with assessment-related skills.

Strengths of the Program

Major strengths of the MAPS program include: (1) a direct in-school service is made available to a large number of potential clients prior to graduation or voluntary termination of high school (this enables MAPS to reach students before they become unemployed or underemployed); (2) the use of an on-line computer to input, retrieve and analyze assessment data and then link it with DOT job categories reduces turn-around time; (3) assessment results are made available to referral agencies through the MAPS computer system, thus helping agencies to serve students efficiently.

Problems and Pitfalls of the Assessment Program

Two major problems have been identified:

1. Training for counselors is needed, particularly in the effective use of assessment tools such as COATS and VALPAR and in the integration of data generated from the assessment process.
2. Linkages with other employment and training agencies (other than informal contacts and conferences sponsored by state or Federal agencies) are needed to fill the professional and technical vacuum that MAPS often finds itself in.

Future Plans

MAPS anticipates an increased emphasis on counselor training, provided that adequate funding and staff time can be secured. Recruiting, hiring and training counselors to augment existing staff is a particularly important priority for the future.

PROGRAM: ASSESSMENT AND RECRUITMENT CENTER,
NORTH ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA

Description of Agency

The Assessment and Recruitment Center is located in Anaheim, California, and serves a large catchment area in northern Orange County. Clients come from lower socioeconomic groups; about two-thirds are seeking employment, and one-third desire job training. The Center receives financial support largely through contracts with three North Orange County employment and training agencies. The Center began its full-scale assessment programs in May 1978. The Center's contracts require processing a total of 3,600 clients and assessing at least 700 clients per year.

Description of Assessment Program

The goal of the Center's assessment program is to determine the client's current job-related skill level, employability potential and job interests. To accomplish this, the following are utilized:

- *COATS* job-matching, living skills and employability components (see Vol. II, Section II).

VALPAR system (see Vol. II, Section II).

Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, a widely used, traditional occupational interest profile (see Vol. II, Section I).

Career Assessment Inventory, a paper-and-pencil assessment tool designed for clients with some post-secondary education who are job-ready. Scores are provided on three basic scales: general occupational themes, basic interests and specific occupational interests.

Temperament & Values Inventory, a paper-and-pencil inventory that assesses clients' temperament and values for comparison with average norms. Results are used to assist in matching a job-ready client with appropriate occupational categories.

Orange County Manpower Commission Work History Form, an in-house device that gathers data on client special skills, previous employment, special training and interests.

Assessment Summary Form, an in-house tool used to give clients and referral agencies a brief summary of assessment data.

Client Observation Form, an in-house form used to record observed client behavior during assessment. The referring counselor, assessment technician and vocational counselor list comments on areas such as ability to communicate, assertiveness, appearance and physical limitations.

Employment & Training Plan Form, an in-house tool used by counselors to summarize the client's goals, interests, abilities, barriers to employment and training and recommendations.

Assessment is conducted at the Center's assessment facility—a recently acquired, modern, single-story building that houses staff offices, client counseling areas, work sample stations and COATS audiovisual systems. The Center is headed by a full-time coordinator, and its staff includes specialists in assessment, recruitment services and vocational programming.

How the Assessment Program Developed

The Center is an arm of the North Orange County Community College District. It was developed to supply assessment and recruitment services for three major North Orange County employment and training agencies.

Current Operation of the Program

Clients are referred to the Center from other agencies in the catchment area. They spend from 2½ to 18 hours in the assessment process. Once recruited and referred to the Center, the typical process for clients is as follows:

1. An initial interview with a counselor determines eligibility and current level of job readiness. For clients who are appropriately skilled, referral is made to either the state employment service or other employment programs, such as Public Service Employment (CETA).
2. Most clients are given the COATS job-matching module. The COATS living-skills module and the VALPAR work sample and evaluation system are utilized with clients for whom they are appropriate. Criteria for use of these assessment tools include the client's educational level, career interests, work history and physical or emotional problems.
3. For clients with higher levels of formal education (college and trade schools), specialized skills, or eligibility for Public Service Employment programs, the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, Career Assessment Inventory, and Temperament & Values Inventory are administered. These instruments are used by vocational counselors for assisting clients in transition to other careers. Work samples are not used for these clients.

4. Results from assessment are interpreted by a counselor who works with the client to arrive at a comprehensive plan that will lead to additional training or employment.

5. All CETA-eligible clients are referred to an appropriate CETA agency or program. Clients not eligible for CETA programming receive placement recommendations and are referred to local employment services.

Formal assessment of clients is conducted by vocational counselors and assessment technicians. The counselors are college-trained professionals with specialized assessment training. Technicians are paraprofessionals who are trained by the Center in a three-month, semiformal training process. Assessment results are interpreted to clients only by professional counselors.

Strengths of the Program

The Center's assessment program has several important strengths: (1) an ability to handle clients with widely diverse employment histories, educational achievements, career interests or special physical or emotional handicaps; (2) a physical plant designed to accommodate a relatively large client volume and to facilitate the use of work sample systems; (3) a well-trained professional and paraprofessional staff that is skilled in the use of the assessment tools; (4) a commitment to effectively utilize high-technology audiovisual and work sample systems.

Problems and Pitfalls of the Assessment Program

The major problems identified by the Center are: (1) a time lag between assessment and utilization of results; (2) overassessment of some clients who, because of existing skills and abilities, do not need full assessment services (for example, clients who are functionally literate do not need to be scheduled for the Living Skills component); (3) inability to assess clients with severely limited English skills (such clients need to be referred to other agencies where basic language skills can be provided); (4) a tendency for job matching to cluster disadvantaged clients into low-need jobs; (5) a need for more trained counselors to interpret and utilize the results of complex and subtle assessment data.

Future Plans

To resolve some of the problems identified above, the Center has taken actions to reduce turn-around time to not more than eight days and hopes later to reduce that to five days. The Center is adding more COATS hardware and increasing its facility size, is attempting to reorient the assessment process to minimize overassessment and is referring non-English-speaking clients to a local mini-school prior to full-scale assessment.

The Center also plans to add the JEVS system to its assessment process and to add a visual-acuity instrument. It is important, Center staff have discovered, to measure visual acuity of clients accurately. Finally, there is an expectation that contracts will be added to assess an additional 600 to 700 clients in 1979.

PROGRAM: JACK BREDIN COMMUNITY INSTITUTE,
EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

Description of Agency

The Jack Bredin Community Institute, located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (pop. 500,000), presently provides training in offset printing and office skills for clients over 17 years of age who have not been satisfactorily employed due to personal, social and/or economic difficulties or insufficient formal education. Enrollment in each program is limited to five or six trainees at a time and lasts 12 to 20 weeks. Adjustment to the work environment is an integral part of the skill training and is supported by sessions in human relations, interviewing skills and temporary work experience placement. The Institute draws two-thirds of its clients from native Indian populations. Immediate employment on completion of training is the major goal of the program. Funding comes from Federal and provincial manpower agencies and from private grants.

Description of Assessment Program

Applicants for the Institute's program are assessed to ascertain readiness for training, aptitudes, motivation to work and need for training in offset printing or office skills. Because of special problems in assessing native Indians and a low client volume, the Institute does not utilize standard paper-and-pencil assessment techniques. Instead, each client completes a brief application form and is then interviewed by each of three Admissions Committee members; one part of the interview process is geared toward assessing vocational aptitude.

How the Assessment Program Developed

In designing the assessment component, three factors were taken into account: (1) Referring agencies were doing some screening, thus eliminating a need for an elaborate intake process; (2) most applicants were native Indians—interviews with them would be of a cross-cultural nature and designed to overcome

reluctance to revealing personal information while other applicants had a history of emotional problems; and (3) the interviewers had no professional training in interviewing or counseling. With the help of the Institute's research associate (from the University of Alberta), a four-page, easy-to-read admissions form was created to elicit basic information. The interview format was purposely left relatively unstructured on the premise that starting with a caring, common-sense approach was a better alternative to a crash course in counseling or administration of potentially threatening, complex assessment tools. As there were no successful cross-cultural assessment models to follow, the best guide appeared to be the insights and experiences gained by two interviewers who had worked with native Indian men and women on other projects in nonprofessional capacities.

Current Operation of the Program

Two hundred and ten individuals (117 Indian) referred by some 30 agencies have been assessed in two years, with about one-third accepted. Assessment begins with the first telephone contact made by agency or client. The first interview process, lasting about an hour, concentrates on giving facts about the program and gaining information on the applicant's education, goals, personal situation and employment history (if any). The following interview allows for a different interviewer's perspective, as well as the chance to focus on potential problems, such as with children or alcohol. The final interview fills in any information not gathered by the first two.

Each applicant also receives appropriate tests of aptitude in working with printing machinery or for level of English and knowledge of the typewriter keyboard. Further relevant information may be requested from the referring agency.

The Admissions Committee rates each applicant as "acceptable," "not acceptable," or "reconsider at a later date," and the decision is relayed to both the agency and the client. If "not acceptable" for the next course opening, alternatives are recommended—vocational upgrading, life skills training, etc. Assessment results for "acceptable" applicants are used to indicate special areas for concentration during the training.

Although there is no formal training program for interviewers, several criteria have been established for selecting them: (1) four years of experience in working with a training staff at a local native printing and secretarial firm and/or equivalent experience on other similar projects; (2) an understanding of the native Indian people through a wide range of personal friends and contacts; and (3) a personal ability to communicate effectively with native Indian people. The emphasis, then, is on personal skills in dealing with a unique client population. Lack of such skills can result in alienating clients and limiting the amount of information that can be obtained.

Strengths of the Program

So far, a formal study of the assessment component of the Institute's program has not been made. However, feedback from referring agencies has been gratifying. Particularly encouraging have been favorable comments from two respected Indian-staffed agencies—Native Outreach (employment placement agency) and Native Counseling Services—and the increasing number of referrals from former native trainees.

The Institute's assessment program is especially interesting because of its reliance on individual interviews to obtain information from clients whose background is of a nonmainstream culture. Specific strengths include: (1) a one-to-one interaction between clients and interviewers designed to elicit personal information in a friendly, relaxed, nonthreatening manner; (2) the use of interviews rather than traditional paper-and-pencil or high technology assessment techniques, which fosters client involvement in each step of the assessment process; and (3) recruiting assessment interviewers on the basis of experience with the client population rather than on specific formal professional training.

Problems and Pitfalls of the Assessment Program

The time spent on interviewing presents a problem for the small staff of the Bredin Institute, but shortening the interviews would be detrimental to the overall assessment. Applicants for the courses are frequently quite resistant to disclosing information about themselves, however relevant to their admission to the Institute. In the Indian people's culture, questioning—especially on personal matters—is considered rude and it is deemed appropriate to answer evasively. Many Indians present a kind of passive defensive shield to hide lack of confidence in the presence of white people, which is often misunderstood as lack of motivation. There also are misunderstandings in communication due to an inadequate knowledge of the English language. Applicants warm, however, to an interviewer who is not in a hurry, who questions obliquely rather than directly, and who listens instead of interrupting when conversation drifts away from the main topics of the interview. Details of past employment or mention of personal worries, or even of future plans which do not appear to include permanent employment, are then often forthcoming.

Applicants who are not Indian may present a different kind of challenge for the interviewer. These clients are frequently on the defensive. They feel ashamed to be on social assistance or they fear discrimination because they have had a mental illness.

Future Plans

Plans are under way to offer additional courses in other occupational skills leading to employment. As yet, it is not possible to foresee the changes which may have to be made in the assessment process described above.

Analysis of Exemplary Programs

Many valuable approaches to client assessment in employment and training settings are represented by the program descriptions reported here and also by the case studies conducted by A. L. Nellum and Associates. It is the intent of this section to abstract a few of the most important features for the reader's review.

First, the programs tend to be fairly complex and multifaceted in nature. They use more than one technique, and the assessment component is tailored to some extent to the individual client's needs, background and capabilities. The idea of *custom tailoring* assessment to fit each client as a unique individual is an important one, and one that developers of new assessment programs should explore carefully.

Second, these programs tend to have relatively well-trained staff to administer, score and interpret assessment tools. This greatly increases the chances that assessment will provide meaningful results, since assessment tools, no matter how good, will yield meaningless data if not handled by staff with appropriate skills.

Finally, these programs frequently take advantage of advances in technology, such as computer processing for information analysis, storage and retrieval components of the assessment system.

The role of the state Employment Service varies greatly in the American programs reviewed here. In some cases, the Employment Service is an important influence and may render assessment services; in other settings, the contribution ES can make is undervalued or ignored altogether. Also, it is important to note that these programs tend to conduct assessment in-house, rather than using an outside subcontractor.

Major Problem Areas

Much progress, the preceding descriptions tell us, is being made in developing assessment programs that can contribute meaningfully to improved service delivery in employment and training agencies. Both research evidence and common sense are being used in the development and refinement of such programs. However, it is equally evident that a number of operating problems

remain. The problems outlined below are based on the five assessment program descriptions, the two reports (one with its own set of case studies) described earlier in this chapter, and on the author's own informal observations via contact with hundreds of employment and training agency professional staff over the last several years.

1. Assessment in employment and training agency settings seems to be in a considerable state of flux at the present time. Many programs are new, and in other cases, internal changes seem to be the rule rather than the exception. It is anticipated that this fluctuation will increase over the next year or so, as the impact of the new CETA reauthorization (with its specific encouragement of client assessment) is felt.

2. Even in some of the exemplary programs reviewed in our case studies, instruments are being used that appear inapplicable for a substantial proportion of the target population for these employment and training agencies. These are tests designed for use with the mainstream, nondisadvantaged population having no limiting aversive reactions to tests or limited experience with the kinds of behaviors testing procedures require. This is surprising, in light of these agencies' otherwise strict attention to the individual client needs where client assessment is concerned.

3. Assessment techniques designed to measure psychopathology and that require a high degree of sophistication to administer, score and interpret are being used. Tests such as the MMPI and Rorschach have no place in an employment and training setting except under the most specialized of conditions (e.g., an agency program directed at a significant number of recently released mental patients, with careful participation in and supervision of testing by a clinical psychologist or comparably trained individual). Even generally good training in assessment does not provide an adequate base for use of these very specialized tests. Their lack of relevance to most employment and training goals is sufficient justification in and of itself for their elimination.

4. Assessment staff are often inadequately trained to administer, score and interpret results from techniques their program uses, even if the devices themselves are appropriate.

5. There is a tendency toward faddism in the use of assessment devices brought on in part by the increased appearance of devices offered by commercial firms. These firms engage in substantial marketing efforts to convince employment and training agencies to buy their products, and in some cases, the intensity of the marketing effort may obscure the lack of worth or lack of relevance of the particular assessment tool.

6. Although integration of assessment into the service delivery function is perhaps accomplished better for the case study programs reported here than in most other situations, there is still a problem of physical distance and lack of communication that inhibits full utilization of assessment data in the decision-making process.

7. Although techniques are needed *now, today,* many of the promising assessment techniques discussed in this volume are still in a fairly early stage of development. Even those created by the U.S. Employment Service and subjected to extensive field testing and evaluation are still relatively recent, leading to an inescapable conclusion: Where severely disadvantaged populations are concerned, the resources for assessment are definitely underdeveloped. The situation is getting better, but the problem of shortfall remains serious.

8. Using a stringent rule of cost effectiveness, some assessment procedures collect *too much information* relevant to given goals. A simple checklist of job history may suffice if only three possible jobs are open. When the goal is to place many applicants as quickly as possible, fine discriminations based on sophisticated measurements can be both wasteful and useless. On the other hand, in attempting to identify what factors are associated with long-term program success, complex assessment of the client and his/her environment may be warranted.

9. Methods for evaluating the utility of assessment programs in local employment and training agencies are underdeveloped; many programs are not evaluated at all.

10. Some counselors—and clients—resist assessment programs because of a general suspicion of psychological assessment, unfortunate prior experiences and a variety of other problems.

11. There is new legal liability for all employment and training agencies with respect to assessment, based on the *Uniform Guidelines* mentioned earlier; actual lawsuits are being filed by clients claiming that assessment discriminated against them in being placed for training or employment.

12. Often there are unrealistic expectations about what assessment can yield, and this, in some cases, has been fostered by commercial developers promising much more than they can actually deliver.

13. Assessment sometimes is used as a crutch or as a way of distancing agency staff from clients.

The effective client assessment program must grapple with these problems; some suggested problem-solving strategies are given in Section III.

III. DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

What's Covered in this Section

The model for client assessment programs presented in the first part of this section outlines the basic functions of assessment in a deliberately simplified, linear fashion. It is intended to provide a foundation for program developers to adapt and elaborate on, depending upon what combination of purposes assessment serves in a given agency setting (see discussion in Section I on purposes of assessment).

Further conceptual underpinning is provided by Bruno's (1978) approach to classifying assessment programs, summarized in the second part of this section. Program developers can use both these sets of concepts about assessment when addressing the early steps in this section's *planning checklist*. All of this material constitutes input to the creation of a *process* or *structure* into which the content of assessment—the techniques described in Volume II—will fit. Developing such a structure is just as important to success in client assessment as selecting (or creating) the best possible assessment tools to serve given purposes in an employment and training agency setting.

Assumptions

The concepts discussed in this section all rest on the same basic assumptions:

1. Client assessment is not only encouraged strongly for all CETA-sponsored programs under the new legislation—it will *by definition* take place wherever there is more than one service delivery option for an agency's clients. That is, some gathering of information from which decisions can be made is inevitable when there are *choices* regarding which of several options for service a client should be directed to, unless one simply flips a coin to make the choice. Assessment may be unsystematic, informal, based on counselor hunches or what clients ask for, but it will occur. The only question is whether a relatively more formal and systematic process will help to serve clients better.

2. Assessment programs must be tailored to fit local circumstances: No one model or approach, and no one assessment technology, will meet all agencies' needs. Thus, the planning tools laid out in this chapter must be evaluated in light of how a given agency operates, the kinds of clients it serves and the types of services it provides. Also relevant are the backgrounds, capabilities and attitudes of staff toward assessment.

3. One of the most basic decisions that has to be made about any assessment program is whether it will be conducted in-house or subcontracted. Operation of a subcontracted program will be substantially different from that for one developed or refined in-house. This section will attempt to address both alternatives.

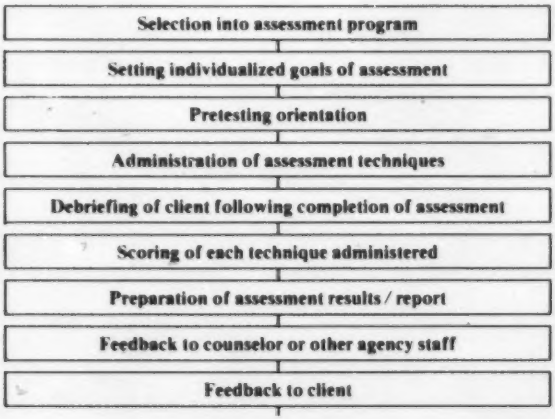
4. Installing or revising a client assessment program is like carrying out any other type of significant organizational change—it is likely to work better if it is well-planned, if staff of the organization are decision-involved in the creation and operation of the program as much as is feasible, and if there is systematic follow-through on program design so that operating problems and needs for improvement can be tended to systematically rather than haphazardly or not at all.

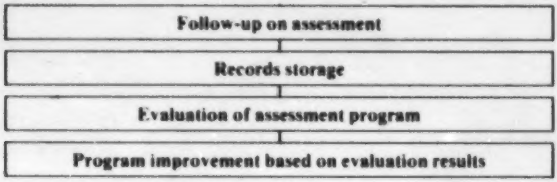
Basic Elements of an Assessment Program

The following chart summarizes the most important components of assessment programs in local employment and training settings. It is intended to be fairly comprehensive, including subdivisions that may or may not be present in a given program. For example, in a relatively simple assessment effort, setting individualized goals for assessment may not be necessary, since everyone receives largely the same treatment. Pretesting orientation may or may not be part of the assessment program; depending upon the type of client served, it may or may not be necessary.

Elements in this chart are discussed separately below.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF AN ASSESSMENT PROGRAM


Selection into assessment program
Setting individualized goals of assessment
Pretesting orientation
Administration of assessment techniques
Debriefing of client following completion of assessment
Scoring of each technique administered
Preparation of assessment results / report
Feedback to counselor or other agency staff
Feedback to client



Selection into assessment program. For any program serving a reasonably broad mix of clients, it is likely that not all clients will need to go through the assessment program. For example, if the program is geared primarily toward providing specialized services for severely disadvantaged clients unfamiliar with standardized testing materials, a relatively well-educated and job-ready client may not be able to benefit much from assessment. A brief interview followed by a training or placement referral may be sufficient. Therefore, with a diverse clientele, it is essential to be systematic in deciding who is to participate in the assessment program.

Setting individualized goals of assessment. Once admitted to assessment, each client should be treated as an individual. Within the limits of flexibility inherent in the nature of assessment services provided, each individual needs to be given services relevant to his or her particular needs.

Client involvement in goal setting is important. Clients often are well aware of what information about their vocational needs, interests and abilities may be relevant to their employment goals. Many have been through service programs before; time and energy can be saved by learning what the client knows before proceeding further. Second, client acceptance of the assessment process is likely to be higher if goals are set conjointly with the counselor or assessment coordinator. The client will then know what the goals are, can appreciate assessment as something that leads to a real end product (i.e., getting training or getting a job) and can begin to develop a sense of ownership in the service process itself.

Pretesting orientation. Particularly for severely disadvantaged clients, getting-acquainted experiences with assessment are critical. Pretesting orientation helps to reduce anxiety, increase understanding of how assessment will proceed and helps further to establish the relevance of assessment to later employment and training services. In cases where client anxiety is very severe, pretesting orientation could involve the use of stress-management techniques such as relaxation exercises.

There is an expression in computer sciences: "garbage in, garbage out." That expression may unfortunately apply quite well to an assessment program not having pretesting orientation, since it is difficult to interpret assessment

results for a client who was highly anxious, hostile, or simply confused about the assessment process.

Administration of assessment techniques. Though details of administration vary according to the particular techniques used, the *general environmental context* of assessment that is needed for success does not. The physical space where assessment occurs should be clean, attractive, quiet and relatively free of distractions and appropriate both to the nature of the assessment process and the kinds of people who are being assessed. Proper test administration aiso is a necessity.

Debriefing of client following completion of assessment. This critical step is often ignored in assessment programs that tend to follow the so-called medical model—the counselor or assessment staff person as expert and the client as passive recipient of service. This approach may create difficulties for at least two reasons. First, during debriefing, the client may provide some critical item of information that will help in understanding the results of assessment. For example, one page of the client's question booklet might have been blank because of a printer's error. Second, debriefing helps further to allay client anxiety about assessment and to provide an opportunity for initial counseling about the use of assessment results.

In some cases, with good debriefing clients may be able to select for themselves job options or training alternatives. The experience of being assessed, especially where work sample approaches are used, can generate many insights that debriefing can help turn into concrete options for taking action.

Scoring of each technique administered. It is important to have well-trained personnel to score assessment devices accurately. Quality control procedures, e.g., periodic double-checks on scoring accuracy, are also highly desirable.

Preparation of assessment results/report. Whenever assessment results are prepared for feedback, the most critical question is, "To whom is this report speaking?" Assessment results used for administrative or evaluative purposes may take quite a different form from what is intended for use by a counselor or for feedback directly to a client.

Feedback to counselor or other agency staff. Whoever is responsible for making decisions about a given client needs to have access to assessment findings. It makes little sense to feed back only an overall rating if there is anything to learn from a fuller presentation of the data about a given client.

Feedback to client. Although clients may need to have edited and simplified versions of assessment results to be able to understand them and to avoid misinterpretation, one should not underestimate the capacity of clients to learn from what came out of the assessment. For example, giving a client the chance to compare his or her internal expectations about performance with the reality can be a growth-encouraging experience.

Follow-up on assessment. It is important to check with the counselor, other agency staff, and, if possible, the client to learn whether the assessment "filled the bill." This is different from program evaluation, since it is immediate and individualized to the given client. Such follow-up may be especially helpful if the assessment program is multifaceted and few clients are likely to receive the total package; with follow-up, it can be determined whether or not any needed part of the assessment package was inadvertently omitted for a particular client.

Records storage. Provision needs to be made for storage of whatever records are required for follow-up work with the client, for program monitoring and evaluation purposes and for other administrative purposes. Given current legal liability for decisions made as a result of assessment, it may be quite imporant to keep on hand not only any reports prepared but also actual assessment records such as answer sheets.

Evaluation of assessment program. Criteria for evaluation of assessment programs were presented in Section I. Having an ongoing monitoring effort is important not only in order to meet Federal or other sponsor reporting requirements but also in relation to making the program better over time.

Program improvement based on evaluation results. It should be assumed that no assessment program is perfect. The assessment program should be structured so that evaluation findings can be implemented and also so that suggestions regarding program improvement can be submitted by assessment staff, counselors and other staff of the agency and by clients themselves. In many cases, real improvements in the assessment operation may emerge from the suggestions clients make.

Naturally, eligibility determination and direct client matching also may occur in the Level 3-type programs, and the distinctions between the three types of program models may not always be quite as clear in practice as they are in Bruno's discussion. In terms of the main operating components of assessment programs, however, Bruno's scheme does capture most of the relevant dimensions. Referring back to the seven purposes of assessment given by the author in Section I, close correspondence can be seen between that set of

concepts and Bruno's "levels of assessment," except that the latter do not include the levels of program evaluation and participation in research efforts.

Clearly, the higher a given program moves on Bruno's twin hierarchies of assessment program characteristics, the more complicated the program becomes. Making this classification initially in developing or refining an assessment effort may, therefore, be of value, since it may help program planners to appreciate fully the complexities of what they are creating. For example, under Progam Model 3, where assessment functions primarily in a tracking or referral capacity, the program should include a mechanism for coordination of goals and priorities for assessment among the several agencies, so that conflict and unproductive overlap in assessment efforts will not occur.

Planning Checklist

A key obstacle to success in planning organizational changes often is a lack of *conceptual foresight* about what may be the anticipated consequences of given courses of action. For example, if a commercially available assessment program is adopted for use without carefully determining what will be its cost, the agency may make a commitment to an assessment function that is infeasible to support on an ongoing basis. Similarly, inefficiency may result if an in-house assessment program is set up without considering carefully whether some or all of the assessment functions could more effectively be contracted out to other agencies such as the state Employment Service.

The planning checklist is only a starting point in building conceptual foresight regarding assessment program development. The writer makes no claim to have included *all* of the possible questions one might need to ask when setting up an assessment function in an employment and training agency. Plans, some of which would have to be committed to writing for budgeting or proposal submission purposes, actually may need to be much more detailed than what is represented by the checklist. However, it is felt that most of the major elements required for effective program development have been included here.

The checklist also can be used to review an existing program in order to determine what might be missing, what could be improved and how to respond more creatively and effectively to the challenges presented at the beginning of this volume.

Two main paths are provided for in the planning checklist. One is for an in-house assessment program to be run by employment and training agency staff themselves, and the other is for a subcontracted program that would actually be operated by staff in another agency, such as a state Employment Service or private, profit-making firm specializing in assessment.

Following the checklist is a discussion of most of its main steps. In some cases, reference is made to other sections of this *Manual* to provide the necessary explanation.

PLANNING CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

- Setting objectives that relate to the agency and its mission ☐
- Making decision as to location of assessment program: in-house vs. subcontracted ☐

In-house Program

- Determining what resources are available to support the assessment program ☐
- Ascertaining how assessment would fit in with overall agency operation—including relationships with local employers and with other service agencies ☐
- Creating planning committee for assessment program within agency ☐
- Determining key person or persons to be responsible for assessment program development ☐
- Determining alternatives for staff involvement in program development ☐
- Information search for usable assessment techniques ☐
- Reviewing identified techniques ☐
- Selecting expert consultants on assessment ☐
- Selecting packaged techniques or programs ☐
- Developing a technique or program ☐
- Adapting an assessment technique or program ☐
- Determining compliance with the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection* ☐
- Determining the costs of assessment (materials, staff training, facilities and associated indirect costs) ☐
- Formalizing an overall plan for the assessment program ☐
- Selecting assessment staff ☐
- Training staff ☐
- Hiring staff or consultants for desired validation efforts ☐
- Regularizing ongoing operation and trouble-shooting ☐
- Implementing evaluation and program improvement efforts ☐
- Presenting assessment programs in funding proposals ☐

Subcontracted Program

Defining needs for assessment input ..... ☐

Considering subcontractor alternatives ..... ☐
- State Employment Service?
- University or college?
- Private nonprofit?
- Private for profit?

Making contact with potential subcontractors ..... ☐

Evaluating the alternative ..... ☐

Determining costs of assessment (including indirect costs not in estimates of assessment providers) ..... ☐

Writing the subcontract ..... ☐

Developing the connective system to support subcontract operation (e.g., how assessment will feed into agency service operation) ..... ☐

Determining compliance with the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection* .... ☐

Putting the subcontract program in place ..... ☐

Regularizing ongoing operation and trouble-shooting ..... ☐

Implementing review and evaluation activities ..... ☐

Steps in Program Development

Setting objectives and relating these to agency services and mission. Just as setting assessment goals is important for individual clients, so setting overall goals for what assessment is expected to accomplish will help a program to develop in ways that maximize the efficiency of the agency's service delivery efforts. Also, establishing the objectives that the assessment can be expected to achieve helps determine how much the assessment should cost and how much assessment is enough. These objectives, in turn, should be related to the second step (below).

In-house vs. subcontracted assessment program. For some employment and training agencies, this decision may be mandated by regulations under which the agency operates, or there may be a completely free hand in deciding whether to maintain asssessment on the inside or contract it out. Cost may be the determining factor or availability of in-house staff to undertake assessment. For example, if an employment and training organization operates under the umbrella of a government agency (state or local) and if there is a hiring freeze on personnel, it simply may not be possible to bring in qualified

assessment staff to run the assessment program. Under such circumstances, rather than compromising the goals and objectives of assessment in order to make do with untrained people (or with too few people to run the operation adequately), it may be better to contract the program out—if that is otherwise a feasible alternative.

The following suggestions are relevant to the planning checklist for in-house programs:

Resources. Good planning requires knowing with some prevision what resources are available to support assessment: staff with some background in assessment, or interest in acquiring it; dollar resources either within the agency or available through submitting a new funding proposal (see below); physical facilities where the assessment can take place; assessment functions that already are set into place.

How does assessment fit in? Assessment doesn't happen in a vacuum. Assessment has to fit in to some degree with the rest of the services the agency provides, with its relationships to local employers and to other service agencies. Time may be an especially critical variable here: If assessment takes too long, employment options or training options through other service agencies may be lost. In such cases, it may be necessary to have a special "fast track" assessment program for selected clients.

Creating a planning committee. Staff who will have responsibility for assessment and personnel whose work functions will be affected by whatever assessment provides should be represented on this planning committee. In a large agency, the committee might be six to ten persons. In a smaller agency, two or three members might be sufficient. The point is to have represented all those who ultimately will be affected by the assessment program. It might be helpful to include one client or former client on the planning committee to provide input from the client perspective (in some situations, this may not be feasible, e.g., if there is strong resistance to the idea by the agency director).

A planning committee is especially important when a formal assessment program is being installed in an agency for the first time. There can be considerable psychological resistance among staff to a new assessment system—it may interfere with other activities (or seem to) and will use up resources that staff may feel could better be invested elsewhere. Staff participation in planning the assessment program can promote program acceptance; people are much less likely to resist new programs if they have had a hand in creating them.

Key persons. Although the above-mentioned committee may play a critical role in *planning* for assessment, in the last analysis, one or two individuals will likely be primarily responsible for actually *implementing* the assessment program once the planning has been completed. The key person or persons need to be clearly identified and adequate authority given to them so that they can do the job of creating the assessment program without undue interference either from other staff or from bureaucratic red tape.

Staff involvement. In addition to the planning committee's activities, certain aspects of assessment program development can proceed best if there is an even wider staff involvement in the development process. For example, when a planning committee has created the basic design for an assessment program, this design could be transcribed on paper in the form of a short planning report or document and then circulated for review by the entire staff of the employment and training agency. In general, the broader the review, the more useful the suggestions that will be obtained and the more built-in acceptance for the program that will result. Another approach may be to hold a staff conference at which the basic assessment program design could be presented, with time allotted for questions and answers and for review of the program design.

Information search. The appendix presents background required for this step.

Reviewing identified techniques. Once an agency has decided what it wants to accomplish with assessment and has formulated a number of alternative approaches to meeting those objectives, the basic question becomes one of how to review available options for assessment techniques and then make decisions. One initial step is to develop criteria the particular program of assessment should meet. What are the cost limits? What are the time limits? What are the client characteristics? What are the staff capabilities in regard to assessment? These all may set limits that will help to weed out certain identified assessment approaches as not feasible for a given situation.

Consultants on assessment. In some cases, despite the presence of qualified people within the agency to help in developing an assessment program, the task of setting in place a complex package of assessment services may require outside consultation. If an agency determines that such consultation is needed, care must be taken to select individuals who can provide the expertise required. For example, professors in local college or university departments of psychology or education often may have the required background in psychometrics but lack practical experience in employment and training services. By the same token, individuals who are highly knowledgeable about employment and train-

ing issues often do not understand enough about psychological assessment to be able to contribute good input in that area.

A good way to start hunting for a consultant is to check with another employment and training program that has previously established an assessment program. Much useful input can be provided about problems encountered and solutions obtained, both in terms of selecting a consultant and often on a whole range of assessment program development problems. In some cases, the best consultant to retain may be the leader of the assessment program development effort at another agency.

Packaged techniques or programs. Two immediate options for "ready-made" special assessment techniques for the severely disadvantaged are the state Employment Service and commercial test developers. Volume II and its appendices provide specific access information. An important general principle to remember is that any organization having only one or a small number of assessment techniques to recommend for a particular agency is likely to do just that—recommend what they have available! The reality is that sellers of commercial assessment devices may undertake quite a "hard sell" in order to get an agency to buy what they have to offer. This may include making unrealistic claims about the benefits to be expected from assessment, minimizing possible operating problems and sometimes downgrading other available options.

Moreover, many distributors of assessment materials in the commercial sector are not themselves psychometrically sophisticated and they are usually not the creators of the material they are trying to market. They are in business to make a profit by selling assessment tools or systems that someone else has created.

All of this is not to say that an agency cannot safely purchase commercial assessment instruments—far from it. In many cases, a commercially available assessment tool or package may be a correct choice to meet a particular need, and valuable technical assistance may be available for its implementation. The availability of training and maintenance services is, in fact, one of the principal advantages to some commercial systems.

By the same token, state Employment Services provide several assessment devices designed expressly for severely disadvantaged clients. Like the commercial test marketers, Employment Service personnel are apt to recommend what they have on hand. However, they also have training and follow-up services available, plus the key advantage of a very large, ongoing research program for generating validity, reliability and normative data regarding these instruments.

Developing a technique or program. In some cases, particularly if the purpose of assessment is quite simple, a brief form or questionnaire may be sufficient to derive the information needed. Staff of an agency, especially those with some prior experience in psychological assessment, may be quite capable of producing such a form on their own. Several of the Assessment Program Descriptions in Section II make clear that this can be done.

In special circumstances, large agencies with equally large budgets for assessment might commission the development of an assessment technique or package by an individual or organization having appropriate capabilities. However, this option is often beyond the means of most employment and training agencies, which have limited budgets for assessment activities.

Also, there are many dangers in creating one's own technique or program unless sufficient resources (including required expertise in psychometrics) are available for that task. Not the least among the dangers of this approach is that of legal liability, since "roll your own" techniques developed with little attention to validity or reliability requirements may be highly suspect.

Adaptation. Many assessment techniques may not be usable directly in a given employment and training agency setting without appropriate adaptation. Again, reference to the descriptions in Section II shows how adaptation has taken place in some real-life settings. Assessment program developers may need to use the basic criteria for evaluating assessment techniques presented in Section I when determining whether an assessment device or system they are thinking of adopting in fact needs to be adapted. For example, some users of the COATS system discussed in the second volume have found that not all components in this commercially developed, multifaceted assessment approach are relevant to their needs. Thus, adaptation may consist of simply deleting one or more COATS components. However, adaptation is a process that proceeds at the adaptor's peril unless care is taken to see that there is integrity to what remains and that the information lost by eliminating or changing certain portions is information the agency can afford to lose.

Compliance with the *Uniform Guidelines.* In the past, employment and training agencies have had relatively little interference from government agencies with regard to client assessment. That situation is now changing. The Mark Battle Associates study in Section II was commissioned because the Justice Department was concerned with the possible adverse effect of assessment procedures on disadvantaged clients of employment and training agencies. The writer also is aware of Congressional investigations into assessment practices used by CETA prime sponsors. Finally, lawsuits charging discrimination are a reality that an increasing number of local agencies may face.

Any assessment program, therefore, must be developed with full cognizance of what the law is and what liability might result from selecting certain options for assessment. Program developers should begin by reading the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures* (*Federal Register*, 1978, Vol. 43, No. 166). Consultation may also be available from state Employment Services, the U.S. Employment Service or the Office of Federal Contract Compliance. An especially valuable step may be to consult with other employment and training agencies to discover how they have dealt with the issue of liability and how successful these strategies have been.

Determining costs. Once a basic operating plan for the assessment program has been developed, it is important to sketch out in more detail what it will cost in terms of materials, training of staff, facilities needed and associated indirect costs (e.g., transportation of clients to a different physical site for assessment—a step to be avoided if possible). Administrators of the employment and training agency may find it desirable to require that those planning assessment prepare an overall cost report that estimates the cost of assessment per client, broken down according to basic categories (cost of materials, staff time, etc.).

Formalizing overall plan. After both a technical plan and cost plan for the assessment program have been reviewed by appropriate agency staff, an overall plan can be put together, perhaps in a written report. This will serve as the "Bible" for operationalizing the assessment program.

Selecting staff. A factor sometimes neglected in selecting among existing staff, or hiring new people, with respect to an assessment program is whether the individual in question has an interest in client assessment. Individuals with backgrounds in psychology or education may be the most likely to have such interest and perhaps to have relevant technical skills as well. In any case, selection needs to be on the basis of competence in assessment, or potential for learning such skills, which is partly a function of interest or motivation.

Training staff. Depending upon what in-house expertise is available, training of staff to administer and use assessment tools may be conducted by agency personnel or may require outside training activities. Local colleges or universities may be contacted regarding available courses in psychometrics, and, in some cases, training may be provided through either the Employment Service or a commercial test vendor. Also, consultants retained for program development purposes often may have the skills to conduct staff training sessions.

Validation efforts. Particularly after reading the *Uniform Guidelines*, assessment program developers will be painfully aware of the need for gathering data regarding the impact of the assessment program. As a very beginning effort, routine record keeping should include entering both a summary of assessment results and a summary of what happened to the client following assessment. Some documentation, even if in the form of case notes, should be provided regarding whether and how assessment results were used. It is beyond the scope of this *Manual* to present a detailed strategy for developing a validation study; an expert consultant may be needed for that purpose.

Ongoing operation and trouble-shooting. Clearly, no newly developed assessment program, or one that has undergone major revision, will operate trouble-free. In point of fact, the changing demands and changing client mix in most employment and training agency settings means that there are likely to be operating problems on a regular basis. The assessment system that takes this reality into account, and provides a routine procedure for "de-bugging," will be much more likely to operate successfully over time.

Evaluation and program improvement. Whatever the administrative requirements with respect to evaluation (e.g., to submit data for continued CETA funding), evaluation also needs to be designed so that results can be used to suggest improvements in program operations. Evaluation reports that disappear into administrative files, never to be seen again, serve little useful purpose (other than to assure that a program will continue to operate, but without possibly much-needed improvements).

Presenting assessment programs in funding proposals. Assessment often is neglected in proposals for funding of employment and training agencies. Staff who prepare such proposals frequently are unsophisticated about assessment. Thus, the assessment program may be described too sketchily or in highly technical language if the proposal section is written by the resident "expert on assessment." Either way, the result may be difficulty in getting the assessment component approved; in some cases, there may even be a loss of funds for assessment because those reviewing the proposal did not understand what was being said!

Some simple suggestions for improving the quality of the sections in funding proposals that describe an agency's assessment program are as follows:

1. The description of the assessment program should begin with a clear statement of the *objectives* of assessment. What, in simple English, is the assessment program intended to accomplish? Why will clients be better served *with* assessment than without it?

2. In the case of proposals to funding agencies other than CETA (but where the employment and training agency submitting the proposal *does* have responsibility to CETA), it should be made clear that systematic assessment activities by agencies receiving CETA funds are now strongly encouraged by the CETA legislation, so there is less free choice about whether or not to have assessment at all.

3. Components of the assessment program should be presented in summary form—again, in understandable English, not technical jargon. A chart or graph outlining the basic steps in the assessment program might be especially helpful (the basic elements chart presented earlier in this section could be used as a starting point for creating such a graphic aid to understanding).

4. Having the section of a proposal concerning assessment reviewed for clarity and completeness by someone whose background represents as closely as possible the background of those who will be judging the proposal would also be very helpful.

The following suggestions are relevant to the planning checklist for subcontracted programs:

Defining needs. See the paragraph on setting objectives above.

Considering alternatives. The state Employment Service can constitute a viable option for assessment subcontracting for many employment and training agencies. There is the advantage of access to assessment techniques developed by the U.S. Employment Service and to USES's large ongoing research program. In many states, the Employment Service may have had more experience assessing clients than any other available organization. Educational institutions, such as a local university or college having appropriate testing personnel and programs or private nonprofit or for-profit organizations providing assessment services, also can be investigated.

Perhaps the most important consideration here is to check out experiences of other local agencies in receiving assessment services from the various alternative providers. Even agencies serving other than employment and training populations may provide valuable information by simply reviewing what their experiences have been. (What has been the cost and impact on service of the subcontracted assessment program? What operating problems have arisen? How quickly have they been solved?)

Making contact. There is probably no substitute for face-to-face meetings with persons representing each major alternative resource for assessment an agency is considering in order to learn what services each can provide and how.

Evaluating the alternati·. See the section above about considering alternatives for assessment. A particula·ly important consideration is learning whether the subcontractor has only one assessment system available or could tailor one to the needs of the given employment and training agency.

Determining costs. This should include costs to the employment and training agency itself that are not included in estimates provided by the potential subcontractor, e.g., for time spent by staff making input to the assessors, reading reports of results, etc.

Writing the subcontract. Whatever legal structure may be required, it is important to get in writing what will be the responsibilities of both the employment and training agency and the subcontractor with respect to assessment. Who is to do what, who is to pay for it, and whose responsibility is it if something goes wrong? Getting such requirements down on paper in advance of establishing the program may avoid many misunderstandings and real problems later on.

Developing connective system. How results of a subcontracted program will feed into the contracting agency's overall service process is important. When will reports be *delivered*? What provisions will there be for counselors to get access to those who prepared the assessment reports if there are questions about the results and their implications?

Compliance, putting subcontracting program in place, ongoing operation, review and evaluation. See discussion above.

Applying the Checklist

For employment and training agency staff ready to begin planning a new or substantially revised assessment system, it may be helpful to obtain some general background knowledge on organizational change and how to implement it. The most comprehensive reference work now in existence on this subject is *Putting Knowledge to Use: A Distillation of the Literature Regarding Knowledge Transfer and Change*, published by the Human Interaction Research Institute in 1976.* An excellent synopsis of important principles of knowledge transfer and organizational change is Glaser (1973). Individuals or committees in charge of developing an assessment program may wish to include in their planning process some of the strategies these two works suggest on implemen-

*Information on how to obtain a copy of this publication, which is now being revised for a 1980 Second Edition, may be obtained by writing to the Institute at 10889 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1120, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

ting programs of change. For example, *Putting Knowledge to Use* contains some concrete recommendations about how to diagnose an agency's *readiness* to accept the change and then how to deal with problems of staff resistance if they are found to exist. There are suggestions in both works about techniques for enhancing acceptance of change, such as trying out the new program on a trial or "pilot" basis before implementing it full-scale.

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APPENDIX

Resources for Assessment Program Developers

Of the many needs employment and training agency staff have when developing an assessment program, none is more pressing—and, particularly for those who do not have a formal training background in psychological testing, none more frustrating—than the need for *information sources* regarding assessment. The purpose of this appendix is to provide a foundation or "jumping-off place" for conducting an information search-and-retrieval process in the field of client assessment.

In order to know what information is required, the purposes and basic structure of the assessment program must first be defined (decisions may or may not have been made yet about *particular* paper-and-pencil tests or work sample systems that might be selected for use). Some thoughts about the possible alternatives ought to be available, though, and the information search can begin with these.

The general reference most likely to be of help to assessment program developers is the writer's *A Directory of Information on Tests* (Backer, 1977).* This monograph provides a directory of books, other print materials, and information systems that may be useful in the search for test-related information. Also included are some strategies for mounting an information search.

As everyone who uses or develops psychological measuring instruments knows, the information explosion has reached educational and psychological testing. Surprisingly, even researchers who have dealt with measurement problems for many years may be relatively inexpert when it comes to information-retrieval skills in this area. Therefore, part of the mission of the *Directory* was to increase professional capabilities in utilization of existing resources on educational and psychological measures. Although the *Directory* was not developed primarily for employment and training agency assessment program developers, it is organized in a way that will permit relatively easy adaptation of its information for that purpose.

The main categories of information included in the *Directory* are as follows:

***Print materials**—books, journal articles and research reports on the subject of educational and psychological measurement. Each entry includes a complete reference citation and a brief synopsis of the document in question.*

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*The complete reference to this publication is: Thomas E. Backer, *A Directory of Information on Tests*. Princeton, N.J.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation, 1977. TM Report No. 62. Copies are available by writing to the ERIC Clearinghouse at Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ 08541.

Information systems—*descriptions of organizations providing information on tests and, in some cases, actual copies of assessment instruments*

Supplementary sources—*indexes to published literature, magazines and journals providing reviews including information in the assessment area and information systems that have a retrieval capability but are not explicitly designed for retrieval on the subject of assessment*

Alphabetized indexes are provided at the end of the *Directory* to facilitate easy access to its contents.

Assessment program developers may wish to obtain a copy of this *Directory* for their personal libraries. Several excerpts given here describe the most critical published volumes of information on psychological testing that might be of interest to employment and training agency staff:

Buros, Oscar K.

Tests in print. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1961, 1974 (Vols. I, II).

Reading tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1968, 1975 (Vols. I, II).

Personality tests. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1970, 1975 (Vols. I, II).

The seventh mental measurements yearbook. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1972.

Intelligence tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1975.

Vocational tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1975.

English tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1975.

Foreign language tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1975.

Mathematics tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1975.

Science tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1975.

Social studies tests and reviews. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1975.

The eighth mental measurements yearbook. Highland Park, N.J.: Gryphon Press, 1978.

These Buros publications are perhaps the best-known reference sources for locating various types of measuring instruments. The eight editions of the *Mental Measurements Yearbooks (MMY)*, supplemented by monographs on specific measurement topics, provide comprehensive information on and critical reviews of hundreds of measuring and data-collecting devices. Information on the instruments covered includes the following: anticipated subject populations; availability of manuals, normative data, alternate forms and scoring services; time required to administer the instrument; where it may be obtained; cost of the instrument; a list of available references about the instrument such as books, journal articles and dissertations; and (in many cases) a critical review of the test by one or more appropriately qualified professionals. *The Eighth Mental Measurements Yearbook* contains listings for 1,184 tests, 898 critical test reviews by 484 reviewers, 140 excerpts from test reviews that appeared in 29

journals, and 17,481 references for specific tests. Of the tests in this volume, 830 are new or revised. The *Mental Measurements Yearbooks* are extensively cross-indexed (by author, test title and measurement topic area); all editions of the *MMY* and its companion volumes in personality and reading are similarly organized. Two separate lists of tests in print (1961, 1974) serve as master indexes to the *MMY*. Taken together, these volumes contain information on most published measures.

Chun, Ki-Taek, Cobb, Sidney, & French, John R. P., Jr. *Measures for psychological assessment: A guide to 3,000 original sources and their applications*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Institute for Social Research, Univer. of Michigan, 1975.

Entries for the book were obtained through a search of 26 measurement-related journals in psychology and sociology for the 10-year period 1960-1970. The volume consists of two major sections, Primary References and Applications. In the primary references section, 3,000 measures are cited; the applications section provides information about 6,600 instances in which the instruments described in the primary references section have been used. Each primary reference related to a particular test contains: a reference citation for a description of the device, the measure's title, and descriptors (key words descriptive of the instrument's content). Each entry in the applications section includes: a serial number used to identify each test application instance; a reference (bibliographic entry) denoting an article or other publication that describes studies in which the device has been used; a set of terms indicating the types of information in the article or other publication cited; and other scales used in the article or other publication listed.

Comrey, Andrew L., Backer, Thomas E., & Glaser, Edward M. *A sourcebook for mental health measures*. Los Angeles: Human Interaction Research Institute, 1973.

Contains 1,100 abstracts, each of which provides information about a specific psychological test. The abstracts have been classified and grouped into 45 clusters beginning with Alcoholism and ending with Vocational Tests. Each abstract is organized into two major sections. The first presents identifying information: title of measure; source of the instrument (book, journal article, mental health center, and so forth); and name of the author and address of source for further information. The second section is a 200-300-word description, usually providing information on the following topics: the test's purpose, target population, administration time, number of items, types of items and response mode used, available reliability and validity data, and findings derived from any major research applications.

Robinson, J. P., Athanasiou, R., & Head, K. B. *Measures of occupational attitudes and occupational characteristics*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Institute for Social Research, 1969.

The second volume of a three-volume collection of instrument descriptions in the sociopolitical domain, *Measures of Occupational Attitudes and Occupational Characteristics*, deals with measures useful in studying the world of

work. Some 60 attitude scales are reviewed, most of them dealing with job satisfaction, although other scales are included that tap occupational values, leadership styles and union-management attitudes. Three chapters examine measures of occupational status and occupational similarity. The monograph also includes reviews of survey findings on job satisfaction and on status inconsistency.

Many assessment program developers may find it of value to contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement, and Evaluation (ERIC/TM), which is part of the massive Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education. The Clearinghouse processes documents related to assessment from test publishers, researchers and individual researchers or research programs affiliated with a variety of practice settings. These documents are available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210. ERIC/TM also produces interpretive summaries, research reviews, and bibliographies on critical topics in measurement and can provide qualified users with customized computer searches of the ERIC data base.

ETS Test Collection: The Educational Testing Service Test Collection is an extensive library of tests and other measurement devices. It was established to serve as an archive for testing and to provide current information on available tests and related services to persons engaged in research, advisory services, education and related activities. The collection presently comprises more than 10,000 instruments. In addition to tests, files on American and foreign test publishers, scoring services and systems, state testing programs, published test reviews and reference materials on measurement and evaluation are maintained.

Qualified persons, whether affiliated with Educational Testing Service or not, may have on-site access to the materials in the test collection. However, publishers' restrictions regarding access to test materials are carefully observed. Persons unable to visit the collection may direct specific questions to its staff by mail or telephone.

Notification about recent additions to the collection and announcements of new tests and services are provided in *News on Tests,* a newsletter published monthly except June and August and available on a subscription basis. New publishers, new references on measurement and evaluation, a calendar of conferences, references to test reviews, and notification of publisher changes are also included in this publication.

Another regular publication of the ETS Test Collection is the *Major U.S. Publishers of Standardized Tests,* a pamphlet listing publishers' addresses. In

addition, a series of annotated test bibliographies has been prepared and is available on request.

Besides *News on Tests* and the publishers' directory, ETS Test Collection publications include the following bibliographies:

Assessment of Teachers, March 1977

Attitudes Toward School and School Adjustment, Grades 4-6, May 1977

Attitudes Toward School and School Adjustment, Grades 7-12, March 1973 (ED 083 323)

Criterion-Referenced Measures, Grades 4-6, October 1978

Measures of Self-Concept, Grades 4-6, February 1977

Reading Tests, Grades 4-6, June 1977

Reading Tests, 7-16 and Adults, June 1977

Self-Concept Measures, Grade 6 and Above, March 1977

Tests for Educationally Disadvantaged Adults, February 1977

For readers wishing to obtain a general background in standards of excellence for assessment measures, one particularly valuable reference is the American Psychological Association's *Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1974). A directory for information-retrieval services, including ERIC and a large number of other systems that may have some capability for retrieving information about assessment measures, is provided in the Human Interaction Research Institute's publication *Information Sources and How to Use Them* (Los Angeles: Human Interaction Research Institute, 1975)* The reader is referred to Section III for additional suggestions regarding how to access information about assessment techniques already in use in employment and training agencies.

A description of the Materials Development Center and its publications, the major resource for up-to-date information regarding work sample systems, is presented in Appendix B of Volume II along with other information about resources for assessment of the disabled.

For a conceptual overview of some of the issues involved in assessment of individuals from minority groups, see Ronald J. Samuda, *Psychological Testing of American Minorities: Issues and Consequences* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

*Copies of *Information Sources* may be obtained free of charge by writing to the Institute at 10889 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1120, Los Angeles, CA 90024.